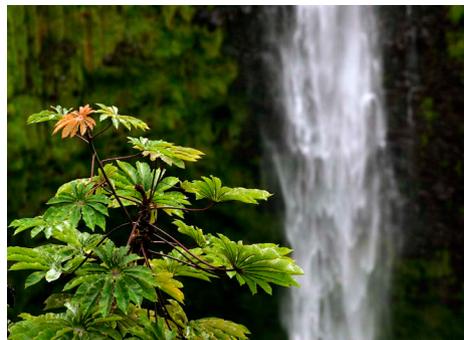


The Essential Guide To Seeing Images

Written by Nina Bailey

Especially for Canon EOS cameras



PREVIEW
EDITION

Written, designed and images by

Nina Bailey

www.eos-magazine.com/ebooks/es/

Foreword by the author

Over the years I have written many different guides, scripts, technical publications and more presentations than I really care to remember, but this is my second ebook.

The Essential Guide To Seeing Images is based on a seminar that we have run for many years which is now called How to See Images. This is an area that many photographers can struggle with, yet others have a natural eye for seeing images. This is a skill that can be taught, but it requires lots of things that control framing and composition to be understood in depth.

I have been lucky enough to have been invited to lead a number of photographic trips and also shoot specifically for some of the travel companies that I have worked with, enabling me to travel to some of the remoter parts of the world such as the Antarctic and some of the polar regions in addition to my own travels around Europe, USA and Africa.

I therefore have a vast range of images from around the world to choose from, with all the continents represented apart from Australia which has so far eluded me. I have included many of the images shot on my travels in this ebook to illustrate the points that I discuss within the text.

The aim of this book is to help you understand the component parts that go together to make up images that work and help you learn to see the images and frame them for yourself.

Hopefully the images and explanations will inspire you to go out and get the very best images of all the subjects that you photograph.

Nina



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for their assistance in producing this book.

Both have endured long hours of reading and proofing this book for which I am very grateful.

Brian Hall

Samantha Hall



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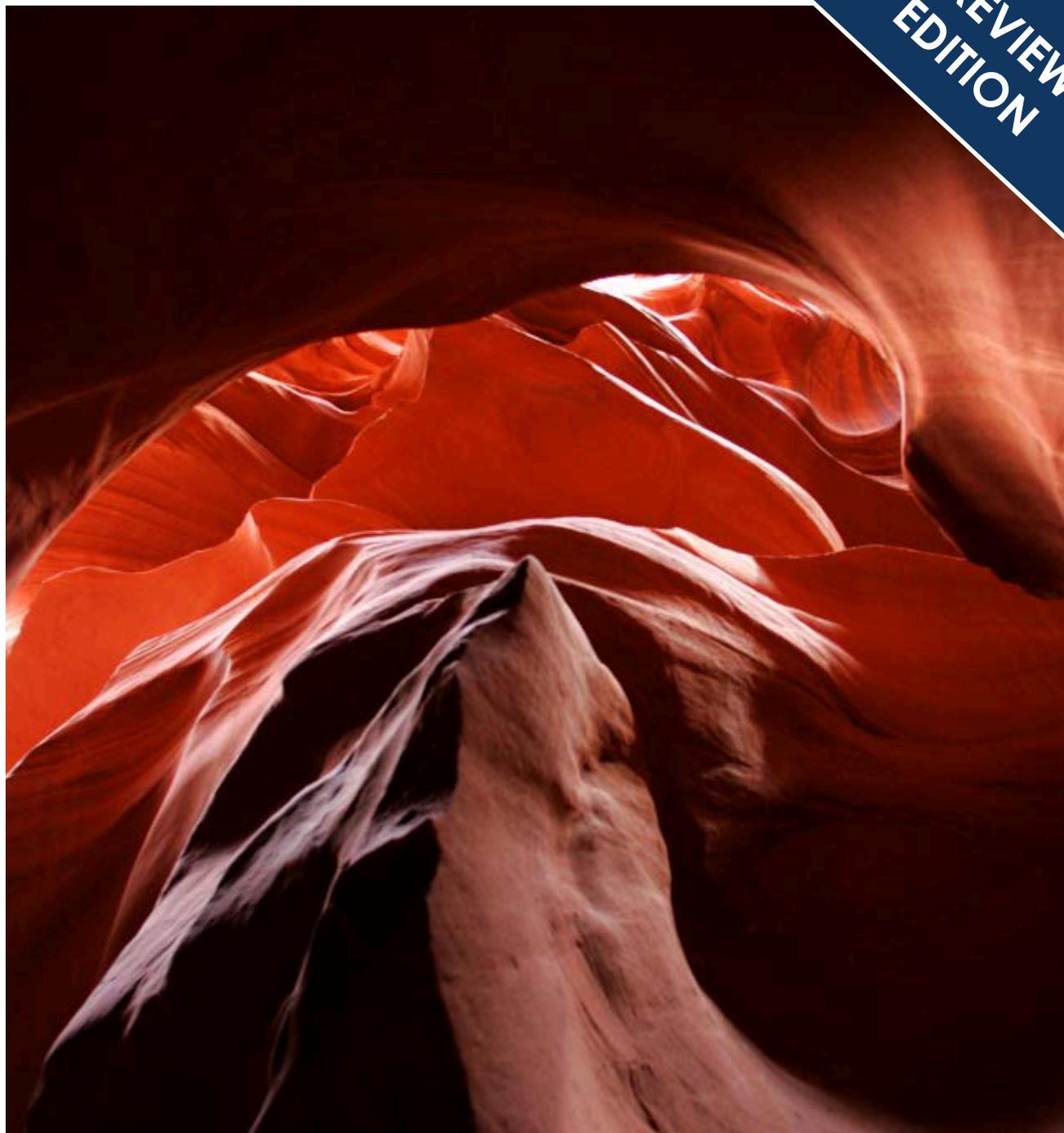
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Introduction to seeing images

This image was taken on a summer trip to Venice. As it was going to be a very hot day I got into the city early to photograph the sunrise and get some images before the crowds arrived. This image was metered for the paving allowing the people to appear as silhouettes.

Introduction to seeing images

One of the key things that photographers have to learn is to see images. Some photographers have a very natural sense of framing and composition and find seeing the potential in an image very easy.

For others it will take more time to build these skills and understand how to see the potential in the scene that is in front of them.

Seeing images is not just about having an eye for a photograph, it's also about having a good understanding of all the key things in photography that affect the images that we shoot.

This can be a diverse range of topics including understanding the basics of how ISO, aperture and shutter speed work together to enable us to capture images in a wide range of lighting conditions.

An understanding of how the lenses that we shoot with shape and often define the images that we produce. Also putting the right lens on to take the shot and saving walking a few metres, is key to getting the results to come out how you want.

Lighting also plays a big part in the images and understanding what works and, often more importantly what doesn't work, is just as important as many of the other things that we will be looking at in this ebook.

This ebook is designed to teach you to look at and assess what is all around you, and understand what you can capture.



This was taken about 6:30am at the Venice Carnival, when it was fairly quiet with some great lighting...

There is no standard way of taking an image, you have to look and see what each image needs and this is achieved simply by practice and making the effort that will reward you with great images.

There are some images where luck also plays a part, but this is rare. Great photography comes from thinking about when is best to take the image and being there. In other words creating your own luck.

Sometimes the timing is key to get the best lighting and the space to take full length shots. Somewhere like the Venice Carnival requires the photographer to be there midweek and out and about just after sunrise before the crowds build up.

You don't need a professional camera. Any model in the EOS range can produce fabulous results in any area, other than possibly action photography, where the speed of the camera and lenses do make a difference.

PREVIEW
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Chapter 01

Components of stunning images

Taken on a visit to Yellowstone National Park, this is part of Mammoth Hot Springs complex of geothermal activity. The weather was overcast, however for the shots through the steam, the overcast lighting worked and enabled an eerie effect to be created with the dead trees.

What makes a great image



What makes a great image is an easier question to ask than it is to answer. There are many reasons why an image can be a great picture, and to further complicate matters, we all have different tastes in the types of photography that we like and dislike.

A great image is one that grabs your attention and makes you look at it, but we need to understand that this can be for many different reasons.

An image can be attractive. But it can be through the actual subject, the colour, the framing or many other aspects, that make it memorable.

As we all like different things, this gives us a very wide range of images that may be attractive to us.

Remember that some of the things we are going to like are personal, like images of family, someone cherished, or even a moment that makes you remember something good. These images are special to us, but may not be stunning in someone else's eyes.



So the first thing we need to define is, are we looking for images that please us or others?

An image needs to be of something that has a visual impact on you or anyone else.

Indeed some of the most stunning images of the recent past came from one of the most appalling events. What happened on 9/11 changed the world forever. We saw it through the eyes of photographers who shot some truly stunning, yet at the same time, appalling images.

Every day in the newspapers we see images that have great impact, yet they are not the type of images that you want displayed on your walls at home. So images do not have to be attractive to be great images.

Indeed some of the wildlife images we take on a safari trip may be of this type of image. We have many images in our collections that would fit into this category, yet the image above is rarely seen as it will not please all.

Sometimes it can be due to the subject is dramatic. For example, Grand Canyon in the early morning light does look dramatic and will provide a far more interesting image that grabs your attention.

An image of a green landscape taken in the middle of the day, is simply not going to have the same effect. Yet landscapes taken in the autumn with all the trees bright and colourful will be more attention grabbing.

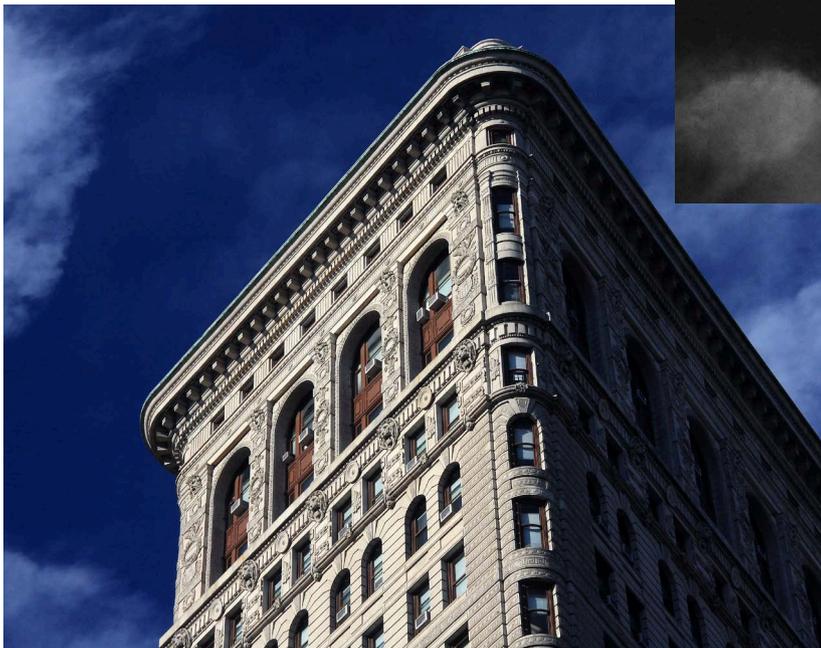


How colour affects the images we shoot

One of the topics we are going to look at later in this ebook is the effect that colour has on your images. We do see the different colours in distinctive ways. Reds, oranges and yellows, all grab the attention. So an image with lots of these colours in will grab our attention far more than an image with predominantly blue and green in it, as these are very recessive colours to our eyes.

Although colour is certainly a very powerful tool within photography, there are subjects that will look better in black and white. Monochrome photography is making a comeback, thanks largely to the very good black and white options available on the camera, or within the raw conversion process.

Monochrome images, when taken correctly, do



grab the attention, and there are some locations such as New York that seem to lend themselves to black and white photography.

Although the image above works in colour, the black and white image looks far more eye catching with the harsher contrast that we can use when shooting in black and white.

The black and white image was shot in camera as a monochrome JPEG file with +3 contrast and a red filter in use. The colour image was processed from the RAW image shot at the same time. I was in New York to specifically shoot in black and white but I also wanted colour images of some of the subjects on the trip.

How colour affects the images we shoot



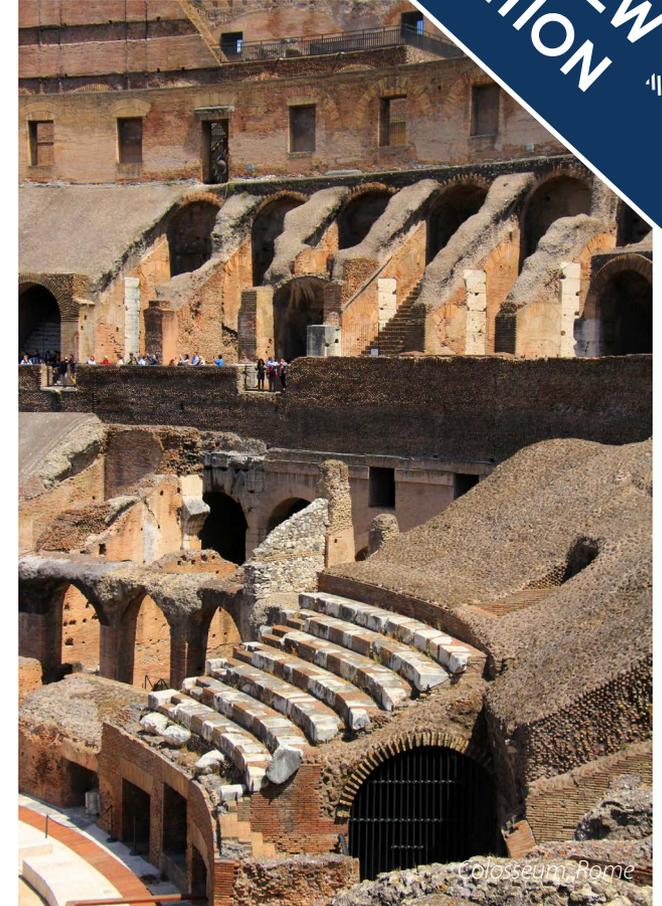
Black and white tends to sanitise an image, so if photographing in some poorer countries, the dirt and grime is hidden by the use of black and white, and the images can look far better as a result.

In this image it also helped solve the problems caused by the clashing colours of the children's clothing.



One thing that certainly helps an image is for the composition to be simple as this makes the image easy to look at.

Normally things that have predominantly just one main subject and where the subject is reasonably tightly framed, work well. Some of the most stunning images are also the simplest ones.

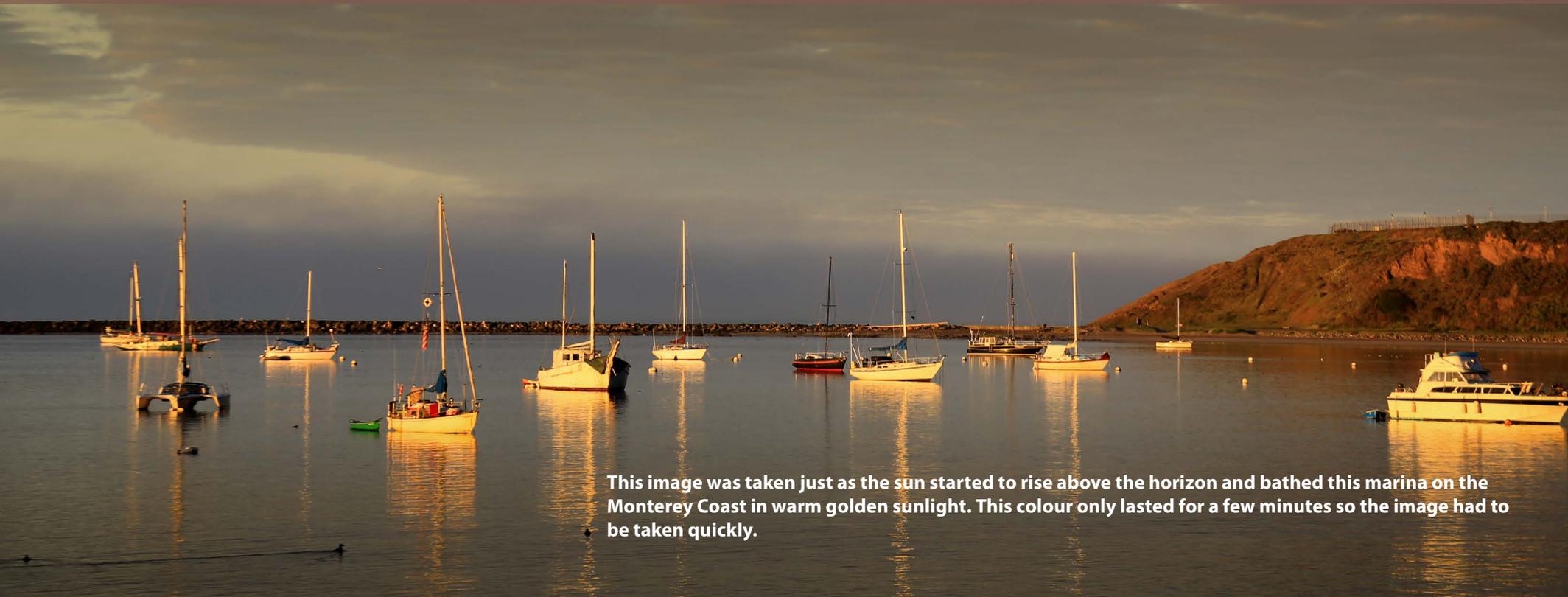


Sometimes the image will attract your attention if it is of a location that you have been to, or even somewhere that you want to go.

This may be due to the fact that you have seen the view, or that it is a different version of a well known scene, and it makes you think about where it was taken from.

Chapter 02

Evaluating the images



This image was taken just as the sun started to rise above the horizon and bathed this marina on the Monterey Coast in warm golden sunlight. This colour only lasted for a few minutes so the image had to be taken quickly.

Learn to evaluate the components of an image

It is fair to say, that many photographers look for subjects, but often do not always see what is in front of them. As a result they may miss some very fundamental things about the image that they are trying to produce.

The images can be very hit and miss, simply because they are not reacting to what they are taking. It's very easy to look at the overall scene and think it will look good as an image without thinking about all the things that can affect the image in relationship to what we are trying to achieve.

Visualise the image

It is important in photography to be able to visualise the image in your mind's eye, before you actually take it. This allows you to see the potential, and to see where the problems are.

This is going to sound like a very long process. Actually, once you have learnt to do this, it will become almost totally sub conscious.

The problem is, in order to learn anything, we have to be taught what to do first, then we have to start doing the things at a conscious level, before they become an automated process. This usually takes a lot of practice.

The first step is to observe what's in front of you. This means looking at all parts of the image, and looking at everything that is affecting the image.

This includes what you are taking, the background and the lighting. This should allow you to decide what part of the scene you want



Lighting from about 45°

Tall building so avoid tilting wide lens upwards as converging verticals will occur

Good blue

Lots to get in - use a wide angle lens

Plenty of light so low ISO can be used

to capture, and how you want it to look.

The image above is a very simple image to take, but there are still a number of things that we should think about before we take the image, as we are showing on the labels above. The next step is to think through how to achieve the image that you want to take. Where are you

going to take the image from, how much of the subject do you want, what lens do you need. Are there any special considerations that will need to be dealt with such as, lighting direction, exposure, white balance, metering, focusing, depth of field, contrast or movement.

Understanding the components

It's important to look at all aspects of the image that we are taking and think about what effect the conditions, lighting angle, colour and intensity of light are having on the image.

We also need to think about things like lens choice and settings on the camera and make sure that they are set up for the image that we are about to take. You also need to ask yourself one fundamental question:

“Can I make this image work at this time?”

You may well be surprised how much of the time the answer to this simple question is going to be no.

This is possibly the most important step. Most images that are not pleasing, will never work if taken in the same place, at the same time.

So accepting the realities of what you can, and can't take successfully, is of paramount importance.

Knowing when to walk away and not take the shot is just as important as being there at the right time.

This is why planning the best time to shoot can be such an important part of some types of photography. If you are there at the right time, and assuming the weather is good you are much more likely to get a great image than if you are there at the wrong time of day which might make the subject backlit.



The ESP Process



There are basically three steps to taking an image, we call this process ESP. By following this sequence when you shoot images you will notice problems when starting to shoot and avoid many of the common problems that can happen when we shoot images.

Evaluate

Look at the image that you are taking and think about all the aspects of the image that will either make the image work or not work.

Think about options that will make capturing the image easier. Also think about what lens will work best to capture the image as you are visualising it.

Ask yourself if the image will work from this location at this time.

Set Up

Set up the camera with the settings that you are going to need to capture the image successfully. This will include the obvious settings of the ISO, shutter speed and aperture.

Remember that these will change according to the light levels and the lenses that you are shooting with.

These settings will also include less used options such as white balance, focusing mode and focusing point, drive mode, picture style and camera overrides such as exposure

compensation or exposure bracketing.

Remember to check that things have not been left set from previous images you have taken that might be inappropriate for the image that you are about to take.

Produce

Simply take the image, however remember to take a few variations of the image. Sometimes different framing, turning the camera vertically or getting more or less into the frame can improve the image that you are taking.

ESP example 01

We will look in more depth at the effect lighting has on your images, more about understanding it and what is and is not possible to achieve, later in this ebook.

This image has a number of things that makes it complicated to take.

The image has bright light through the arch and yet the rock facing you is in shadow. This means that there is a tremendous contrast between the two areas.

It is impossible to take the image as we see it with the eyes. The first thing that we have to decide is what part of the image we want to be correctly exposed.

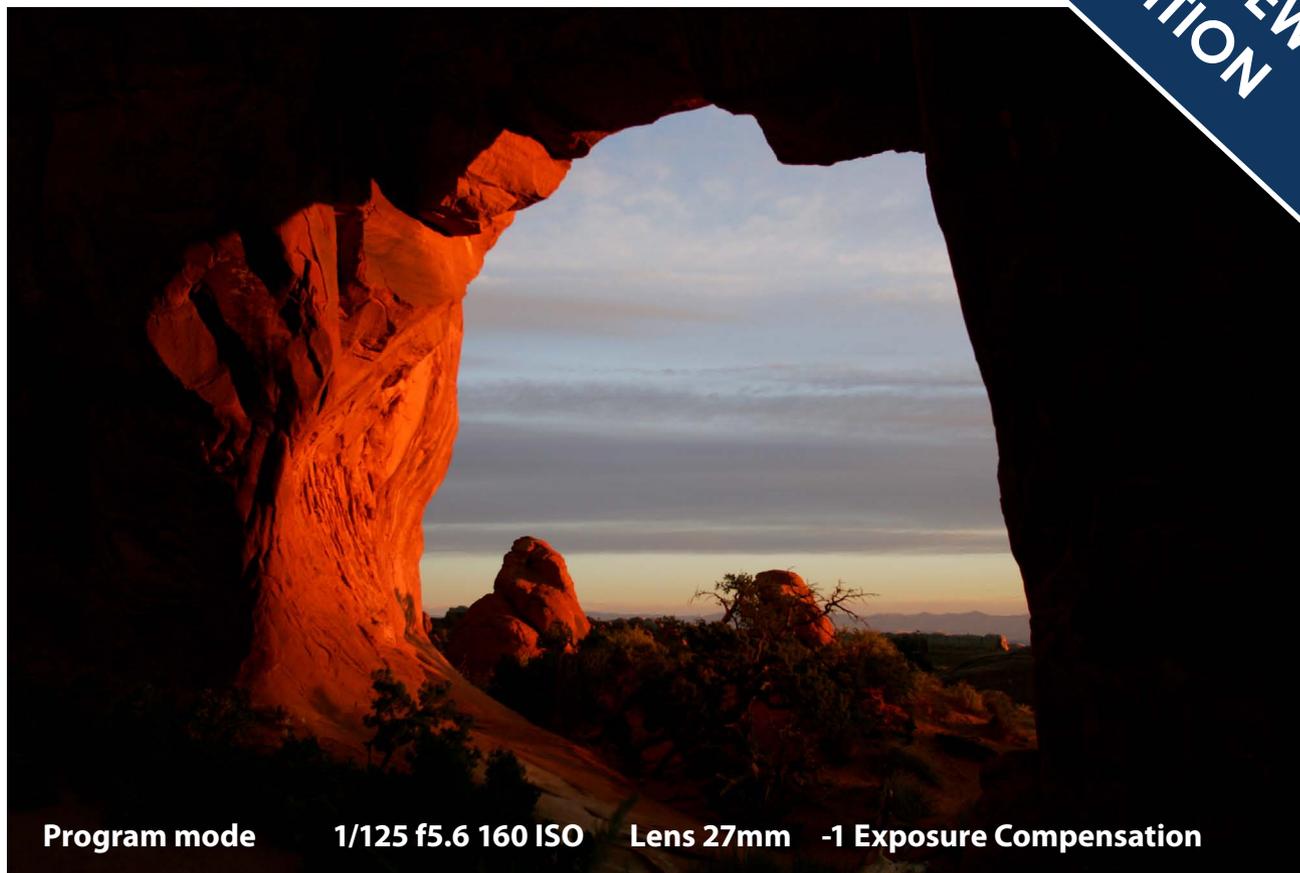
In this instance the only way that the image was going to work was to expose for the bright bits and let the areas in the shade go dark.

This is going to help us decide the framing of the shot, as we do not want too much of the areas that are going to go very dark.

The image was taken just after sunrise. This meant that we had to think about the choice of ISO and exposure settings to check that there is enough light to handhold the shot.

The initial shot showed that the image was going a little bit light, despite ensuring that the key focusing area was located on the lighter area to the middle of the opening.

So exposure compensation of -1 was set on the camera. This image was taken with evaluative



metering. The other alternative would have been to use Spot or Partial metering and then meter off the bright part of the opening and lock it using the AE Lock option. Either method works.

The arch was positioned in the middle of the frame but the part of the arch that was illuminated by the early morning light was positioned on the thirds line for the best framing that was possible.

The angle that I was shooting to the opening dictated the moderate nature of the wide lens that I used to take the shot.

This helped ensure that I did not see the area where the sun was rising through the gap, which would have added to the exposure problems.

ESP example 02

This image was taken early one morning at the Venice carnival. The Venice carnival gets very busy and one of the problems can be getting clean backgrounds in the shots that you take.

This was achieved by shooting with a 200mm lens which allowed me, in combination with tight framing, to cut out the distracting background in the shot.

It also allowed some of the very bright areas like the sky to be cut out of the shot. This has resolved both the exposure problems and some of the flare problems that were being experienced.

The subjects were back lit and fill in flash was used to help lift the faces. The backlighting has produced a lovely glow to the red fabric of the headdresses that the revellers are wearing.

The light level was very low and the flash needed to have a diffuser fitted to reduce the bounce back from the costumes.

The ISO was kept high enough to allow the image to be taken with a long lens that has both blurred, and restricted, the amount of background visible in the shot.

This achieved the smallish aperture that was required to make sure that the faces and the costumes were all sharp. This has also helped to give the flash the range that it needs for the shot.



I ensured that the figures were filling the frame as much as possible, and this has helped with both the exposure and avoiding burnout on the image.

This shot was taken on AV mode as the aperture for the shot was critical. It allowed the flash to work fully as fill in and give the very natural fill in flash that we are seeing.

As the frame was filled by the subjects, the flash gave a very good exposure and no correction of flash output was needed.

As this was taken on a 5D Mark II that goes up to 25600 ISO. Using the ISO at 1000 ISO is not a problem as the quality will still be good as this is a relatively low setting for this model.

ESP example 03

This Weddell seal was taken in the Antarctic, and was posing in some rather cute ways. One of the key things for this shot was to take the image quickly, as the seal was not going to hold this pose for very long.

The camera was already fitted with a 400mm lens, the ISO was set to 200 ISO as the lighting was very bright, even though it was overcast.

The camera was used on program mode, and this has allowed the image to be taken as a straight point and shoot shot.

The only requirements for this shot was for the shutter speed to be fast enough to not get camera shake when handholding.

I prefer not to shoot with the lens wide open, but in the viewfinder I could see that the aperture was f9.5 which was fine for the shot.

The camera's metering was on evaluative, and as the seal is a colour that is correct to expose for and I am focusing on the seal, no exposure compensation was needed, despite being surrounded by snow.

I find the camera's exposure system on evaluative copes extremely well, and so it is used at least 95% of the time that I am shooting.

Although in a location such as Antarctica you can get reasonably close to the wildlife, having a lens of at least 400mm is a must as it allows you to get the tight framing that you often need.



Program mode

1/790th f9.5 200 ISO

Lens 400mm

Although I could have got closer in this instance, the seal may well have changed its pose and I would have got more background in the image which might have shown some of the other seals that were present at the time.

Having the camera out of the bag and switched on ready to use was also a key factor in getting the shot.

ESP example 04

Surfing is quite a difficult sport to photograph; the waves can cause focusing problems and getting to places within reach of the action can prove difficult.

On this day there was a strong wind and this made staying on the breakwater, that allowed me to get out in the sea, interesting as it was quite slippery to start with.

Also the odd very large wave coming up the breakwater made it necessary to have someone watching out for what was going on around the photographer.

The key to this image was having a long enough lens to reach the action, so a 400mm lens was used.

The next problem was achieving a fast enough shutter speed to both hold the lens steady, and to freeze the action.

This requires an ISO that is right for the lighting conditions, and the exposure requirements of the shot. The light was very bright and so 400 ISO was high enough to get the settings that were essential to use.

As there was a lot of spray, a high shutter speed of 1/1600th was selected, this has frozen the subject, however with a more modern camera with a much wider ISO range I would probably be shooting at 800 or even 1600 ISO and a shutter speed of 1/2000th or 1/4000th if shooting the image today.



TV mode is the obvious setting to use for this image, however when using it you cannot just look at the shutter speed. You have to make sure that the aperture is not flashing, and if it is, adjust the settings so that the exposure will come back within range.

The camera's exposure system coped well with all the white water in the shot.

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